

**Ross Fitzgerald, *"Red Ted": the life of E.G. Theodore*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1994, ISBN 0 7022 2649 1, xxiv + 487 pp, \$24.95.**

This is an outstanding biography of an extraordinary Australian. Its author, Associate Professor Ross Fitzgerald of Griffith University, has written highly acclaimed texts on various aspects of Australian history and politics. He has a special interest in Queensland's past and is also well known as a commentator on political and social issues. Edward Granville Theodore, known widely as 'Red Ted', was born in South Australia in 1884. Largely self-educated, he became active as a young man in the Queensland labour movement and within ten years was an outstanding Queensland Premier. He later moved into federal politics, becoming Treasurer in the Scullin Labor government in 1929. A royal commission into his mining interests forced his temporary resignation and he lost his seat in the 1931 elections but he impressed many observers with his considerable economic skills during the very difficult Depression period. He subsequently helped launch the Consolidated Press empire, owned gold mines in Fiji and became a leading administrator during the Second World War, dying in Sydney in 1950. Fitzgerald's account of his life is meticulously researched, beautifully crafted and full of insights into the character of a man who was widely misunderstood.

There is so much in "*Red Ted*" of interest that it is impossible in a short review to do it justice. One of its outstanding features for me is the attention it devotes to Theodore's very important north Australian connections. At Arltunga near Alice Springs in 1903 he operated a hand-held drill and successfully convinced other men in this very isolated goldfield to demand a pay increase. In 1906 in the Chillagoe-Irvinebank area near Cairns he also mixed mining with organisation of workers. With others in 1907 he formed the Amalgamated Workers' Association of North Queensland, which later merged with the powerful Australian Workers' Union. In 1909 he was elected to represent the Chillagoe area in the Queensland Legislative Assembly. Despite his rapid rise to Premier in 1919, he remained very interested in north Australian matters. He wrote many articles on his proposed scheme for a 'Seventh State' that would encompass the Northern Territory and its surrounding areas.

His enthusiasm for the north received a rebuff in 1925 when he was defeated as a candidate for the north Queensland federal electorate of Herbert and the 'Mungana affair' which did him so much political damage in 1930 concerned his financial interests in a north Queensland mining venture. Fitzgerald argues convincingly that many allegations made about Theodore's involvement with Mungana were unsound and malicious yet concedes that 'the taint of Mungana stayed with Theodore until his death in 1950, and well beyond'. As Director of the Allied Works Council between 1942 and 1944, he organised resources for vital war-related projects in north Australia.

Another fascinating aspect of Fitzgerald's work is the manner in which it sympathetically yet not uncritically deals with Theodore's personal life. His paternal grandfather, Georges Teodorescu, was a Romanian Orthodox priest yet Theodore himself became a nominal Catholic and ultimately an atheist. Theodore's marriage was, for the most part, unhappy. His wife was often difficult and demanding. Although actually eleven years older than Theodore, she claimed to be only two years his senior. Ultimately they separated and Theodore had a relationship with a woman in Fiji. He was not a man who often revealed his emotions.

For most of his career Theodore was a moderate and a pragmatist who would not be out of place in the Australian Labor Party of the nineteen nineties. But he was also, Fitzgerald stresses, 'much beyond the average run of Australian politicians'. It is a tragedy that he was struck down as a political leader at a time when his particular skills were so desperately needed.

DAVID CARMENT

**Harry Gordon, *Voyage from shame: the Cowra breakout and afterwards*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1994, ISBN 0 7022 2628 9, xi + 331 pp, \$16.95.**

It still comes as a shock to many Australians when they are told that the largest prison escape in history occurred near Cowra in New South Wales on 5 August 1944. More than eleven hundred Japanese prisoners of war tried to break out of their camp. While two hundred and thirty-five, including four Australians, died, hundreds

escaped and were recaptured soon afterwards. As Harry Gordon explains, the 'full facts' of the escape were not disclosed until quite recently. The author of an earlier book on the incident published in 1978, he found in preparing a new work that there was much information of which he had not been previously aware.

Gordon is a distinguished journalist who is the author of nine previous books, most of which have been well received. It is, then, not surprising that *Voyage from Shame* is clearly written and well organised. I found it difficult to put down as the story it recounts is full of drama and human interest. The book is also based on thorough research. Much relevant archival material was used in its preparation and many of those involved with the escape, both Australian and Japanese, were interviewed. Gordon makes a sincere effort to understand the Japanese participants and hopes that his book will assist the process of reconciliation. My one complaint is that some dialogue, while based on evidence, has clearly been invented for dramatic effect.

A point that emerges frequently is the enormous shame associated with surrender for the Japanese. Many prisoners at Cowra had given false names when captured so that dishonour would not be brought to their families. The breakout was, from an Australian perspective, a futile business as there was virtually no chance that any escapee could elude recapture for very long. For the Japanese involved, though, the aim was to remove shame by being killed or committing suicide. Even today some survivors of the breakout find it difficult, if not impossible, to discuss or even acknowledge their prisoner of war experience.

Among the more prominent organisers were air force men captured in the Northern Territory. Hajime Toyoshima, for instance, made an emergency landing on Melville Island after the Japanese raid on Darwin on 19 February 1942. He was found by Matthias Ngapiatilawai, a young Tiwi man who became the first person to arrest a Japanese serviceman on Australian soil. Another group of five airmen, including Marekuni Takahara, were also washed ashore on Melville Island after being shot down at sea nearby.

That the escape took place at all was due to lax Australian procedures. Many members of the garrison battalion at the Cowra camp were unfit for normal military service and their weapons were obsolete. There were some early warnings that a breakout might take place but these were

not properly understood. Two middle-aged Australian soldiers died heroically in a vain attempt to stop the escapees with a single Lewis Gun. Even the efforts to recapture prisoners were sometimes badly organised. Some soldiers sent out to look for the Japanese were only armed with bayonets.

*Voyage from Shame* deserves a wide readership. It ought to appeal to all those interested in the Australian experience in the Second World War. It also is worth close attention at a time when many Australians are looking closely at developing understanding with various Asian peoples. Of these the Japanese are perhaps the most important yet remain the most perplexing.

DAVID CARMENT

**Denis Winter, *25 April 1915: the inevitable tragedy*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1994, ISBN 0 7022 2472 3, xiv + 290 pp, \$18.95.**

Denis Winter is an historian with a special interest in the First World War whose recent book *Haig's Command: A Reassessment* attracted much criticism and led several reviewers to question his capacities as a researcher and writer. *25 April 1915* is slightly less controversial but some of its claims are still likely to be contested. The purpose of his latest work is to present a new picture of the landing at Gallipoli, an event with almost spiritual significance in Australia. Winter claims to have used documents never before studied by historians. He argues that these conclusively demonstrate that the campaign was doomed from the very beginning. This view is, of course, in opposition to the quite widely held belief that the Gallipoli operation may have succeeded if the men in charge at various levels had made wiser decisions during the campaign.

Winter considers various events leading up to 25 April through discussion of the soldiers involved, strategic planning and operational matters. He argues that there was 'a quantity of forethought and planning in stark contrast to the customary presentation of Gallipoli as a knee-jerk response to the Russian appeal for assistance of January 1915'. He provides an evocative description of the day to day experiences of the Australians and New Zealanders training at Mena in Egypt, not far from the great pyramids, and